

**Jared Kaholokua**



Tape No. 36-10-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Jared Kaholokua (JK)

Waihe'e, Maui

April 20, 1998

BY: Jeanne Johnston (JJ)

JJ: Okay, this is an interview with Jared Kaholokua, at his home in Waihe'e, Maui, and the date is April 20, 1998, and the interviewer is Jeanne Johnston.

Okay, Jared, I'd like to ask you first, if you'll tell me when you were born and where.

JK: I was born in Pā'ia, July 12, 1935. And in Pā'ia.

JJ: In Pā'ia. Was there a hospital?

JK: Yes, in the hospital.

JJ: Okay, and tell me a little bit about your family, about your mother.

JK: My mother? Well, my mother was also born in Pā'ia. And her maiden name was Myrna English. Her father was Caucasian. And they lived in Pā'ia. But we later moved to Māliko, in 1945 January. We stayed with my grandmother down there. And the house was in the bay, Māliko Bay. And it's very close to the ocean. We were right next to the ocean.

JJ: How long did you live in Pā'ia?

JK: We lived in Pā'ia since 1944, and then we moved down to Māliko.

JJ: Do you remember what Pā'ia was like during those days?

JK: Oh, yeah. It was a very big camp. We had a gym, we had a lot of facilities. We also had a golf course—two golf courses, in fact, one in Lower Pā'ia and one in Upper Pā'ia. And it was a very big camp. And our camp was called Skill Village. And my grandfather also lived over there. His name was Heine English, Henry English.

JJ: He was your mother's father.

JK: He was my mother's father.

JJ: Can you tell me a little bit about him and your grandmother?

JK: Well, my grandmother died before I was born, you see. She died in 1930. So I wasn't born yet. So I don't know too much about my grandmother. But my grandfather was a very—well, he was Caucasian—and he was a very, very good man. Strict, strict old man, he was, but very good. I used to love him a lot. And he worked for HC&S [Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company] as a mechanic supervisor. And he had a lot of friends living around him. Arthur Woolaway, you said? He was one of my grandfather's very good friends. He was also the manager of Pā'ia Theatre. After he got through working, he used to go up to the theater, and he was the manager over there. And the owner from the theater was Paschoal.

And my grandfather had eleven children. He had six girls and five boys. And three of them is dead already, they died. My aunty just passed away about one month ago. The oldest. Of all them now, my mother is the oldest. She's eighty-five years old now. And she's living with her brother in Kaua'i. Actually, she's taking care of him, because he's pretty sick, you see. Not that kind of sick, but he gets his high blood pressure goes off and on. So my mother's over there, because my uncle lost his wife on Kaua'i. I mean, she died from cancer. That's about all about the family.

JJ: Back to your grandfather—how old was he when he died?

JK: My grandfather died in 1964 or so. He was born 1889, so he was about in the seventies. Kind of old seventies he died.

JJ: What did Pā'ia look like in those days?

JK: Well, it was a regular *kine* camp. Lot of houses, lot of good houses. The houses was all four, five-bedroom, big parlor, big kitchen, all the houses were that. My grandfather was a very important man, so he had a house that had eight bedrooms and four baths. And a big parlor, big dining room, everything, he had inside. Big kitchen.

JJ: Was it plantation housing?

JK: It was a plantation house. It's built by the plantation workers.

JJ: Can you tell me a little bit about your dad's family?

JK: Well, my dad's family was born in—they lived in Māliko. They lived in Māliko in the bay, a big green house, also built by the plantation, you see. And it was a six-bedroom house, and it was only five houses in that whole area right next to the bay. In fact, only three houses. My uncle was in the back of us. My grandmother's house was right next to the beach, only about two-minutes walk to the beach, that's how close we were. And had the Awais across.

My grandfather also died when I was not born yet. And my grandmother, she lived at a very old age of eighty. She died when I was in the service. And she was born in 1870 something. I don't know the exact date, but . . .

JJ: This was your father's mother?

JK: That's my father's mother. Kaholokula.

JJ: And was she Hawaiian-Chinese?

JK: She was Portuguese-Hawaiian. Her maiden name was Sniffen. But she had more Hawaiian than

Portuguese. She was 64 percent Hawaiian. My grandfather was pure Hawaiian, on my father's side. He also told us that he had some *ali'i* blood, which is royal. And he told us our king was Alapainui. That's what my father telling me what his father told him, because I wasn't born when my grandfather was.

JJ: Can you tell me about that, what it means to be *ali'i*?

JK: Actually, *ali'i* is royal blood, you, like Kamehameha them was all *ali'i*. Kamehameha, Lili'uokalani, and Kalākaua. They was royal, that's what it means, royal. Royal blood.

I got my grandfather's picture right up there if you want to see him. No, that's my father, that. My grandfather is the one with the hat, sitting down right over. . . . Yeah. He was pure Hawaiian.

JJ: Did he tell you stories about his life and when he was younger, your grandfather?

JK: No, I was not born when . . .

JJ: Oh, that's right.

JK: Yeah, I was not born when—the information I have is from my father passing down to us.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JJ: Okay, so we were talking about the stories that your father passed down to you from your grandfather.

JK: Right.

JJ: About the *ali'i*. Could you continue? Would you continue about the stories passed down to you?

JK: Well, I think I got everything in already, on the tape. He passed down to me what his father passed down to him. And that's the only reason I know about this.

JJ: Now, you said that your maternal—your mother's grandmother was Hawaiian-Chinese also.

JK: Right.

JJ: So you have Chinese ancestry also.

JK: Her maiden name was Apo.

JJ: I see, okay. And that side of the family lived in Pā'ia, then? Your mother's family lived in Pā'ia?

JK: Right.

JJ: And when you were born, was your dad living in Pā'ia at that time too?

JK: We was living in the same village—Skill Village—we was maybe about five houses away from my grandfather. We was close, pretty close. I used to go down there all the time. And my grandfather used to greet us pretty happy every time we used to come visit him. So, that's our village. My father also worked at the HC&S, you see. He was a mechanic.

And then later on, he owned his own business, selling kerosene. He had his own business. I used to go work with him, selling kerosene to the Kāheka, Pā‘ia, all around the camps we used to go. And he used to work maybe twenty days a month. That’s his own business, that was. And later on in life, he went down to Kwajalein. It’s not Kwajalein but Eniwetok. It’s an atoll that’s down under. And we worked down there for about six years. And then he came back and he went back to his old job as an auto mechanic. That’s about all about my father.

JJ: Okay. So the town of Pā‘ia, when you were young, living there, was all plantation town?

JK: It was all plantation.

JJ: And what did you do when you were a kid? This is before you moved to Māliko. What do you remember about growing up in Pā‘ia?

JK: Well, we used to go to the gym. They had a big gym over there. We used to go over there and play basketball, Ping-Pong, volleyball. And we also used to go down to the ballpark, used to play football and baseball. We had lot of activities because all the boys used to get together and we used to go play hide-and-seek and that tag. All the kids’ games we used to play. Because I was pretty young that time, I was only about maybe eight years old. Living in Pā‘ia---well, I grew up in Pā‘ia all the way until I was about ten years old, and then we moved down to Māliko. But we had a good time over there. We used to climb the trees (chuckles).

JJ: So then when you were ten years old you moved to Māliko. Why did you move out to Māliko at that time?

JK: My grandmother was staying by herself, and my father was getting trouble with his jobs. They didn’t have no unions, so he was getting trouble. So we all moved down with his mother. And his brother was right next door. And that’s the reason we moved down to Māliko and stayed with my grandmother. Because she was all by herself, too.

JJ: Can you describe what Māliko looked like, what the town looked like, before the tidal wave?

JK: Yeah. Well, it was, as I told you, it was a bay. The bay is when you get two cliffs on the side, you see. Didn’t have anything---a lot of coconut trees, lot of coconut trees. The houses was very limited.

And they also had a farm over there, you see. But it was way up. It was about one mile from our house away from the ocean. It was owned by this guy named Maeda. He had ducks, chickens, lot of fruits, papayas, bananas, and lychees. He had a big farm over there. And we used to go over there and help him pick the fruits, and then he used to sell them and then give us a little bit money.

And then playing over there—didn’t have too many guys to play with so we played with my cousins in the front yard. We played tag football, steal ball, any kind of game we used to make up. And then during other times, we used to go down to the beach. We used to go down to the ocean, pick up crabs, hook fish, and get some *tako*, which is squid. We spent most of the time on the beach, looking for shells, anything, anything that we had.

JJ: How big was the community there? How many people do you think lived in Māliko?

- JK: Māliko? Not more than fifteen.
- JJ: Were there any stores?
- JK: No stores. If we wanted to go to the store, we had to go all the way to Pā'ia.
- JJ: How far away is that?
- JK: Oh, it's about a ten-minute ride, ten to fifteen-minute ride. Because we was in the middle of nowhere, actually. We was in the middle of nowhere. Ha'ikū was above us, which is another ten to fifteen-minutes ride to get—and over there had stores, too. Either we go to Ha'ikū or we go to Pā'ia. But Pā'ia was more convenient, because it was bigger. More stores there.
- JJ: What about occupations? Did anybody work down there in Māliko, or did they have to leave that area to work?
- JK: No, didn't have no—nothing to do down there. Only the working people down there was the farm. Maeda's farm. That was about it.
- JJ: Tell me a little about what you did in the ocean during those times. Swimming or fishing or . . . ?
- JK: Well, we used to do a lot of swimming, and then we used to go pole fishing. And those days, they had a lot of fish. Sometimes the wave would come in and bring the fish right on the shore, and we used to just go pick it up. Like *maninis*, mullet. That's all we had to do, is just go down the beach and just pick it up. You see it flapping on the stones. Because those days had a lot of fish.
- JJ: Okay. Let's see, do you remember anything having to do with the war years here on Maui?
- JK: Mm hmm [yes].
- JJ: Was there any evidence of the war going on in your life?
- JK: Well, the time was down Māliko, there was army people camped in Māliko. We used to find—after they left—we used to find guns, hand grenades, ammunition, all in the place they used to camp. And then they stayed there a couple months. They had some dogs, they had bicycles, and they used to give that to us. And they had a dog that was strange, was kind of vicious. So we didn't want their dogs. They had German shepherds, bulldogs, but they was kind of vicious because they were trained to kill. The dogs was trained to kill. So my father didn't want to bother the dogs when they left. They had to get rid of the dogs. But the army people were stationed down at Māliko at one time. Not too long, maybe less than one year. That was during the war years—that was in '44, they came over there. And they left before '45. That's about it.
- JJ: Can you tell me what happened—we'll go to the day of the tidal wave.
- JK: Yeah. That I remember very clearly because that is one thing that you cannot forget, the tidal wave. I got that thing in my memory. I can tell you the beginning. It was before six o'clock that we woke up and ate breakfast.
- JJ: Whose house were you at?
- JK: My grandmother's house, you see, we was in Māliko Bay. And the very funny thing that me and

my brother went out. The front of our house was all screen. We could see the ocean. We could see the ocean because it was all screened. It wasn't enclosed, you see. So my father was sitting down on the porch, and had the screen in front of him. And then me and my brother looked down at the ocean. There wasn't no water in the bay. The water was back about, say, about a 150 yards, the water was back. It was right at the entrance of the bay. It was all the way. Didn't have no water in the bay. So me and my brother looked at that because we wanted to stay home from school to go down the beach, go fishing. But my father was kind of confused, because it's the first time he ever did see this. So he was talking with his neighbor and then he said, "Ey, something funny, look, try look, the ocean."

And the neighbor say, "Oh, I think, new moon, that's why."

So in about just before seven o'clock, the wave started to come in very slowly. Very slowly, but it . . .

JJ: What did it look like? Can you describe it?

JK: Yeah. Just like a normal wave just coming in very, very slowly. And it's kind of build up, build up, build up. The first wave wasn't very big. It was very small but gradually gaining height. So my father told me and my brother to go—you see, we had a path to go up to the side of the hill, up the cliff. We had a path, a very good path, we just climb up and then we go to the main highway and we can look down at the ocean. My father told me and my older brother to go up that path, because he thinks it's a tidal wave. So my father grabbed my youngest brother, which was only four years old, and I had a cousin staying over there, too. And he grabbed the two of them, and he ran in the yard and he ran up the path with the two of them, followed by my grandmother. My grandmother followed him, and my uncle them all was up there already.

And the wave came very slowly, but it did come right by the yard, by our front yard. And it wet the whole [yard]. And it went back again. And then the second wave came. It was coming in the same way, but it was coming higher and higher and higher.

JJ: And where were you at that time?

JK: We was on the hill, watching the tidal wave.

JJ: And all your family was . . .

JK: They was all up there. My mother left for work already. She worked at the pineapple canneries, and she leaves at five o'clock. And another thing too, we didn't have no warning that time. Didn't have no siren. So we were very fortunate that that thing came at the time it did. Because if it came about four, five o'clock, I think we'd all be dead.

And then the second wave came. And then it build up, build up, build up. And then it came into the yard and lifted the house off the foundation. And it threw 'em back about three feet this way, maybe three to five feet. It just picked it up and threw 'em back against the coconut trees.

And the third wave came. It was almost the same like the second wave. It was pretty big. It went all the way up to the farm, anyway. But the fourth wave come. That was the biggest of all the waves, the fourth wave. Because it just picked up the house and crushed 'em against the coconut trees. And the house just flew up in splinters, on the fourth wave. And the coconut trees, on the



fourth wave, just was going down, down, down. And we watched the waves—had about thirteen waves. I mean, thirteen waves going back and forth.

JJ: How long did it take between the waves? How much time?

JK: Well, you see, when the wave came in, and then it went back like this, you know? The force of the wave going back is just as strong as the wave coming forward. So, I'd say, in about four, five minutes, every wave came. Because the whole thing was completed in about less than one hour. The whole tidal wave was complete in less than one hour.

And we had a big bridge that the bus used to go across, the cars. And the wave just ripped down the whole bridge. It was kind of far back, too. It was, say, about five hundred yards from our place going back towards the farm. It was a very big bridge and that wave just took it right down. The only way we could go back after that, back to Pā'ia, was through the Ha'ikū area. Because we couldn't come back this way, because the bridge was down. That's where the highway was connected over there. So we had to go back that way.

And another thing, too, that was on April Fools' Day. So when the bus was coming down and then we stopped the bus and told that it's a tidal wave, you cannot go through. The bus driver say, yeah, he knows because it's April fool, you see. We told him no, it's true. So he got off of the bus and he watched with us. He thought, wow, you know, something ridiculous.

Ours was the biggest, because ours was enclosed. And the water got nowhere to spread out, but come in and just build up, build up, build up, you see. Because we was in a bay.

JJ: How high do you think the waves were?

JK: Oh, shucks, it was huge. I would estimate easily it's over—it came halfway up the mountain. And the mountain is about—the climb is about sixty feet. So it was about halfway over that. But the center of that one was huge. Very, very huge. I'd say it was about thirty-five to forty feet easy. And strong force they have, very strong force.

JJ: Did it make any noise? Do you remember any noise?

JK: You mean, when the wave coming in? No. Not very big noise. It just was a regular water coming in and out. And the backward force was very strong, too, you know.

JJ: Can you describe what you saw when the wave was going out?

JK: You mean, coming back?

JJ: Yes, as the wave went—it went back out again? You said it was very strong?

JK: Very, very strong. You see, the wave went all the way up. Because it's a river over there, and it goes all the way to the farm. A big river, that's where something like, you know, when it rains hard, the river comes down to the ocean. That's what it was like. And when that wave goes up, the water coming back was very dirty. It was muddy just like. The force was---the whole ocean wasn't blue anymore, it was all dirty. Very, very dirty. In fact, black dirt, was. And then the force coming back. And then had some trees going in, and debris, and all that thing coming back with the flow. And then used to bring 'em back again when the water come forward again.

JJ: What about the houses?

JK: The houses was all destroyed. My uncle's house, my neighbor just above us—his name was Pablo—destroyed. And our house was the first one to go. And the Awai [house]—that was built on the bank—slowly eroded underneath and then slowly it went down. Maybe it took about twelve waves for the thing to go down, because it was on the high hill, now. And the wave went very high. And then slowly it undermined it and then the house *wen* come down. The whole houses was all destroyed.

JJ: Was anybody injured in Māliko?

JK: No, nobody was injured. That's why the time of the tidal wave was—we were very fortunate that it came at that time, so that everybody was aware of that. Nobody was injured. Some dogs was killed, though. We had some dogs, and they got killed.

Well, you got any more?

JJ: What happened after---when the waves stopped coming? How did you know when it was over?

JK: It came back to normal. You see, the water was where it always was, the whole bay was full up with water, but just had little ripples. That's how we know that the thing was over. But we couldn't do nothing, because our house was completely gone, our car was gone. My uncle's car, they found 'em about five hundred yards inside of the bay. But it was all wrecked up, it was totalled. It was against the cliff, you see, way up about five hundred yards. They found his car, but our car, we saw 'em go down in the ocean already.

JJ: And did you ever find it again?

JK: No. It was a Model-A, but you know, it was a very nice car with the rumble seat and everything. But no, we never did find that car again. It was gone already. We knew it was gone. The house, all the furniture, everything went just completely in the ocean.

JJ: So what did you do next?

JK: We went back to my grandfather's house in Pā'ia. My mother's father.

JJ: How did you get there?

JK: Somebody, I don't know, one of our friends took us over there. I don't recall who, but they took us. And we had to go the long way around, because the short way is going that way, but we went through the Ha'ikū way. And it was very long ride. And then we went and we stayed with my grandfather. The only thing we owned was the clothes that we wore. That's all we owned. And then we stayed with my grandfather for about couple months, and then we moved to H. [Hāmākua] Poko. We moved to H. Poko.

JJ: Did your family rebuild in Māliko?

JK: No, they did not rebuild in Māliko. My grandmother moved to Pā'ia, also. And Māliko now, the place we used to live, there's a rodeo over there. That's where they hold the rodeos now. And then the Awais rebuilt. That's the only guys that rebuilt, was the Awais. But most of them is dead now. The only one that's living is only one boy. They died from—some died from cancer. The

mother passed away a long time ago; the father also died. But they did rebuild. Only the Awais rebuilt over there. The same place, too. But we never did rebuild.

JJ: What was life like after the tidal wave?

JK: Well, it was kind of hard, because we lost everything. It was kind of hard. My father still had his job. My mother was also working at the cannery. My grandfather also helped us out, too, because he was pretty. . . . You know, he had some money. And he used to take care of—also gave some money to my mother to buy clothes and all that. He was a big help. My grandfather was a very big help.

JJ: What about school? You must---did you go to a different school?

JK: No, we went to the same school. You see, our school was in H. Poko. The way we used to go to school is catch the bus. It used to come from Ha'ikū and pick us up at Māliko, and then take us to Pā'ia, holy rosary school. It was a Catholic school, anyway. And we continued going to that school.

JJ: So did you go to school right away after . . .

JK: Yeah.

JJ: . . . the tidal wave?

JK: The very next day.

JJ: What was it like to go to school after a tidal wave?

JK: (Chuckles) Was pretty hard, because we still had the picture in our mind. We still had that picture in our mind. What I was going to say now? We still had that picture in our mind. And we had all the new clothes given to us by all the neighbors and all that. We didn't have our real clothes. But it was kind of hard. And then the shoes—only the shoes that we had on, we *wen* go. But it was pretty hard at the beginning. It was pretty hard, but after a while, it worked out.

JJ: Did it change your life a lot, do you think, the tidal wave, your whole family and its life?

JK: No, it didn't change our life. Our life was the same. In fact, when we moved to H. Poko, I think we had a better life, because we had more things to do. Māliko was a very lonely place, you see. Very few friends. When we moved to H. Poko it was a big community, and we made lot of friends, and we had lot of activities. We had a gym, we had a baseball park. We used to play baseball with the friends. We used to play football. We had a lot of things to do when we moved to H. Poko. When we was in Māliko, we didn't have very many things to do. The only thing we used to go down the beach. Our activities was very limited. And we used to go to our friend's house, but we couldn't play too much games because only about three or four people we could play with. But when we moved to the bigger community, our life got better. My life got better, anyway, because I used to like to go out and play sports. We made lot of friends, because it's a big neighborhood we moved to. I think our life got better after that.

JJ: Well, is there anything else that you'd like to share?

JK: Oh, I think I've said about enough. (Chuckles)

JJ: Well, thank you very much.

JK: All right.

END OF INTERVIEW



# **TSUNAMIS IN MAUI COUNTY: Oral Histories**

**Center for Oral History  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

**March 2003**